



LAW IN LANGUAGE.

A Thesis.

BY

REV. JAMES ROY, M.A..

CANDIDATE FOR ADMISSION IN COURSE, AT CONVOCATION,
APRIL 30th, 1883, TO THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF LAWS.

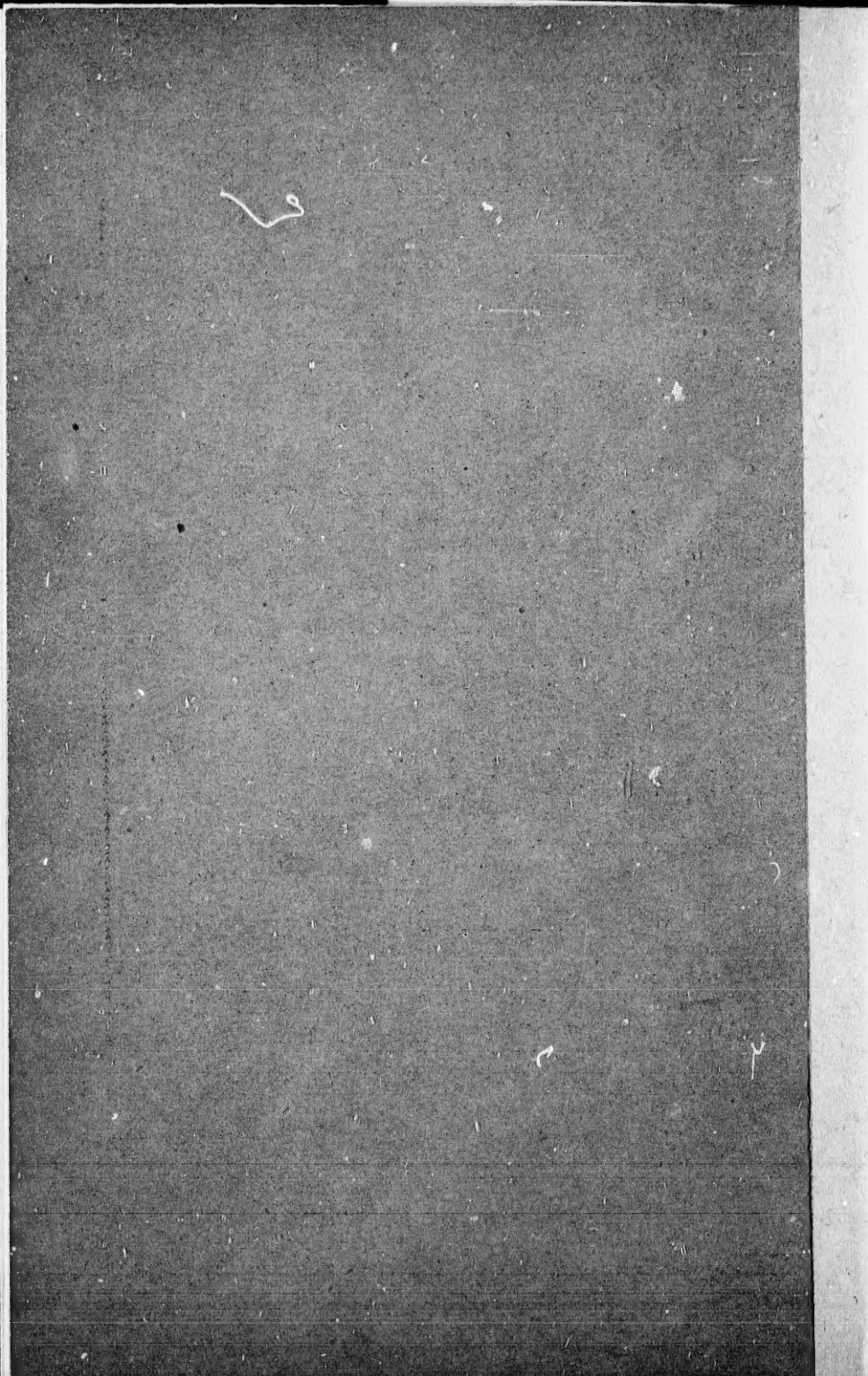
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LAW IN LANGUAGE.

1. "Laws," as defined by Montesquieu, "are, in the widest signification, the necessary relations that have their origin in the nature of things."* "Law, in the domain of science," says Littré, "signifies the necessary conditions which determine phenomena, the constant and invariable relation between phenomena, or between the different phases of a single phenomenon."† Hooker says: "That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the form and measure of working, the same we term a Law."‡ More modern scientific language, however, seems to consider laws as fixed and invariable modes of action, resulting from inherent tendencies called into operation by relations between different forms of existence. This may be seen from a sentence quoted from a work entitled: "A Candid Examination of Theism," and written by an author who uses the name "Physicus." This author is Mr. G. J. Romanes, a Canadian, so a friend informs me. On page 56 of that work, this sentence occurs: "Newly established relations would necessarily of themselves give origin to new laws." This definition of laws as modes of action resulting from relations, rather than relations themselves, seems to be assumed in the use of the term by almost all writers on science to-day.

2. The discovery of these laws, in any department of nature, is attended with a peculiar delight, never less than the most exquisite gratification of the senses. *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.* || Every such discovery becomes a new starting-point in the progress of the race. The law, once perceived, becomes a new fact which, combined with other facts of the same kind, furnishes a new basis for generalization. Im-

*De L'Esprit des Lois. Liv. I. Chap. I.

†Dictionnaire de La Langue Française. *Sub voce*, 21°.

‡Eccles. Polity. Bk. I. II. I.

||Virgil, Georg. Bk. II., l. 490.

agination seizes upon it, and leaps to theories. Efforts to test the correctness of the theories reveal new laws ; and the human race starts upon a fresh journey of advancement.

3. It is no novelty to speak of the laws of matter ; but to this century is due chiefly the attempt to unravel the mysteries of speech. There are good reasons for expecting to find language, as well as material nature, subject to fixed laws. If speech were, as some have supposed, an arbitrary invention, it might be destitute of law and order ; but if it is a natural product of previously existent causes, some relations must be found between the causes and effects, and fixed ways of action must arise from these relations. Man has universal characteristics which must show themselves in all that is peculiar to the race, and not to specially gifted individuals. Of these, language is one. No brute speaks with articulate utterance. Man does. But man is physical, and his organs are effected by geographical and meteorological conditions. He is guided by sight and sound ; and, if one of these is wanting, the other cannot produce the effects peculiar to that which is gone. He is often wilful, and not submissive to reason ; and the stubbornness of unreasoning will shows itself in his habits of speech as well as in other things. All these facts must have their relations to his language. Laws must exist in it, since both the matter and the mind that make the man have fixed peculiarities of action.

4 The various forms of human utterance grow. This fact, we can partly observe for ourselves. At school, we are taught to follow certain rules and forms of expression. When we are somewhat older, we read the newspapers. Immediately, we find coming into use, words and phrases and constructions which our previous instructions condemned. We hear the expression, " Help me do this," instead of " Help me to do this ;" " You don't speak like we do," instead of " You don't speak as we do ;" " Will I go ?" instead of " Shall I go ?" We become indignant at what seem barbarisms, though they are often really revivals of forms of speech that had become obsolete. Our indignant protests are unheeded. The barbarism becomes popular. The grammarian learns to defend it ; and our language takes one step forward toward its slow, but complete, transformation.

5. Such changes, however, are necessarily too slow for a single life to observe their wide effects. To the history of language, then, we must go to learn the laws, in accordance with which the transformations of speech take place.

(a). Of the many tongues of mortals, not one is without its history. We boast of Alfred and Chaucer and Tennyson, as Englishmen; but so changed has become their speech that they could not understand each other, were they all now living, and acquainted only with the forms of speech peculiar to their day. Victor Hugo and Littré spoke French, as did Thibault and Villehardouin; but he who can with ease read the "Autumn Leaves" and the "History of the French Language" of the former, cannot always read with equal ease the "Sonnets" and the "History" of the latter. How far the modern Angelica Pale and Constantine Oekonomos resemble Thucydides and Homer may, perhaps, be surmised from the humorous exaggeration of Edmond About, who says: "Modern Greek differs from ancient only by a system of barbarisms, the key to which is easily found. It is all comprised in this: murder suitably the words you learned at college. In the foundation of the language nothing has been changed."

(b). When we go back to the Latin out of which the Romance languages sprang, to the Germanic dialects, from which came English and Frisian and Dutch, and to the Sanscrit itself, we become conscious that all are but the outgrowths of something else that has passed away. That which is to-day analytic, employing separate words, and not inflections, to express relations of thought, was once synthetic or inflected; and the inflected can be proved to have arisen from languages more analytic than their progeny. Examine the single word for "emperor," in Villehardouin, and you find the spelling and accent of it when used as a subject, *Emperères*, as compared with those given to it when used as an object, *Empereor*, still bearing the traces of the inflected Latin nominative, *Imperator*, and the accusative, *imperatorem*. On the other hand, an examination of an inflected word, Latin or Greek, will show the remains of old word-forms which, in some way,

have lost their power as words, and have become apparently arbitrary, though regular, terminations. In *ἐφιλήσαντο*, *e-phile-s-a-nt-o*, "they loved themselves," we have an augment, a stem, a tense sign, a euphonic connecting vowel between consonants, a relic of a pronoun, and a letter indicating voice. In *ῥεγερῆμεν*, *reg-er-e-mu-s*, "we might rule," there are a stem, a tense sign, a mood sign, a sign of a pronoun of the first person, and a sign of the plural. To show how these syllables which become mere inflections, arise from other words which once had a separate existence, I quote a sentence from Earle's "Philology of the English Tongue," p. 250. That author gives a West-of-England sentence, "Telln, what a payth out, I'll payn agan," and appends the following remark: "Here the *n* represents the old accusative pronoun, *hine*, which has been absorbed into the verb." In this remnant, then, of an Anglo-Saxon word, we see how inflections arise.

(c). But this growth is seen, not only in the development of one language from another, and one word from others, but in the combinations of the separate words. Every student knows that there is a time in language when presentive words, or words which always present some conception to the mind, are of themselves sufficient to convey connected trains of thought, and that there is another time when symbolic words, or those the sense of which depends upon their relation to presentive words, become more and more necessary to fill up the meaning sought to be conveyed. At one time, and to one race, complete sense is given by the phrase *beati mundo corde*, in which not one symbolic word occurs. At another time, and amongst another race, inflections are insufficient, and must be helped by particles, as in the Greek *Μακάριοι οἱ καθαρὸι τῇ καρδίᾳ*, *Makarioi hoi kathoroi te kardia*, while even these, to an English ear, must be supplemented by a verb: "Blessed are the pure in heart." * The necessities of brevity in modern telegraphy are, to some extent, training us to a certain return to that primitive simplicity when presentive words alone convey connected thoughts, and have in themselves a full-

* Earle, p. 247.

ness of meaning which needs few or no symbolics. Instead of saying, "Send the box of peaches by the train, on Monday, at noon," we save time and expense by writing, "Send box peaches by train Monday noon;" and the presentive words, with the aid of one symbolic, convey all the meaning which it seems necessary in ordinary correspondence to fill up by the use of six. Thus progress in civilization produces growth in language.

(d). Growth is seen in the development of the meaning of words. It would be mere commonplace to trace the progress of the word *perception* from a sign of a purely mechanical act, to that of one purely mental; and any good dictionary will show how words at first taken to represent the physical are afterwards used as signs of mental, moral and spiritual thought, while poetic or oratorical passion often clothes fleeting thoughts of beauty in the weird imagery of material things. On the other hand, one of the first things that strike the reflective reader of the History of Doctrines, is the degrading transformation undergone during the centuries by words once redolent of poetic beauty and heavenly inspiration. The freshness of their first imagery becomes forgotten. They then awaken no lively pictures, and kindle no warm and loving enthusiasm, but become the mere expressions of party feeling, and the dry, hard counters of intellectual systems. The term "Regeneration," for instance, once containing a perfect vision of beauty, recalling the loveliness of young leaves and soft grass, of blossoms and warbling birds, of balmy breezes and the hum of busy insects, was made by the first Christians to represent the change of a soul once grovelling in worldliness and wrong, into the home of every heavenly virtue, only to become, in after ages, the battle-ground of contending sectaries, whose wrangling served to show how far the original beauty of the word failed to impress the minds, or show itself in the conduct, of those who used it.

This growth of language, from one phase to another in a single speech, and from one speech to others quite different, in sound, vocabulary and syntax, proceeds by fixed and universal methods.

I. The first law to be noted here is this: Language follows nature's demand for expression of thought and feeling. Peculiar-

ities of organization and education frequently give power, while circumstances give occasion, to hide both thought and feeling ; but nature generally seeks to express itself. Such expression is language ; and, while articulate speech is the peculiar possession of man, even the lower animals have some forms of such language as aids in communication. The ant organizes, and so must have a language. The hen varies her cry to meet varied emergencies. The terrier asks and gives thanks for food, not merely by looks and gestures, but by low plaintive moanings, as if searching for articulate speech. The crow, high in the tree-top, caws out his warning to the plundering flock, with a sound distinctly varied from his ordinary cry. So, too, man, by look and gesture and sound, finds relief from the pent-up thought and feeling that rise within. It is a law of his being that his organs instinctively discover their own use. His mouth needs no special revelation to teach it to suck in infancy ; and babes need no public conventions at which to decide how to draw in their nutriment. Neither special revelation nor public agreement must precede the use of eye or ear : the revelation of their object comes through the instincts of their possessor ; and where vocal organs exist, the instinctive desire to express the sudden fear or admiration, the deliberate conviction or the earnest inquiry, will bring these organs into play. Some sound will be uttered. It may be an interjection, or the imitation of some sound pronounced by surrounding nature, or an utterance, the appropriateness of which is lost to view in the apparent arbitrariness of its selection. An instance of a word whose origin was apparently arbitrary is "gas," a term invented by Van Helmont, to designate the subtle form of matter now recognized by that name. Even "gas," however, is not quite arbitrary, since it was suggested by the word "Geist," the German term for spirit. But, whether the sound is ejaculation, imitation, or the result of arbitrary choice, once let it be recognized as a sign for thought or thing, and articulate speech has begun. This, at least, may be assumed as true in the unsolved problem of the origin of speech.

As thoughts multiply, so do expressions ; and the latter necessarily follow the former. It is most interesting to trace the growth of thought, and even civilization, in the development of a single

root through its successive changes. A good example is the Greek root *βο, bo*. It is, like the Sanskrit *gou*, and the English *moo*, an evident imitation of the lowing of cattle. In the substantive *βοῦς, bous*, Doric *βῶς bōs*, Latin *bŭs*, it signifies an ox or cow. In the verb *βοῶ, bōō*, Latin *boo, boāre*, it signifies "to make a loud cry, as oxen make the loudest cries of any domestic animals. In the substantive *βούτυρον, boutyron*, butter, it appears as a designation of a production from the cow, showing a development of the Aryan pastoral life, while other forms tell of agriculture, sacrifice, and the perception of beauty, even by "bucolic" men, in large, soft, lustrous eyes. In the verb *βοσκω, bosko*, it appears again as the act of feeding cattle; and, inasmuch as oxen were the largest domestic animals, it reappears in the prefix *βου, bou*, great, as *βούβρωσις, boubrōsis*, a voracious appetite. Each of these forms becomes the root of many derivatives. Metaphor lends its aid in the transformations. New compounds furnish new roots, which again form new series of derivatives, till an examination of a lexicon will give proof that, as the ideas of the ancient Indo-Europeans extended, the original onomatopoeic root became the parent of more than two hundred surviving words.

As thought becomes elevated in character, so do the expressions used to represent it. We first deal with concrete objects, and with these as with individuals; and not till afterward do we rise to the conception of classes and abstract properties. We first deal with material things and their qualities: afterward we deal with thoughts and mental and moral qualities. So do abstract terms tell of progress in classification, analysis and synthesis; and metaphor applies terms borrowed from the material world to the mental and the moral. Missionaries, charmed with the luxuriant verbiage of savage tongues, have been prone to adduce them as proofs of degeneracy from some higher state; but the fact is that this verbosity is an evidence that the races who use it have not advanced beyond the lowest stages of intelligence. What intelligence can be found in a race which has words for every species of tree, such as oak, pine, beech, birch, maple, elm, but which has no word for the concept "tree," or which has separate words for the leg of a fowl, a horse, a man, but no word for "leg?" What

intellectual development exists amongst people who have expressions for "to be ill" and "to be well," but none for "to be?" Yet in America, Polynesia and Africa, such races are found; and the absence of abstract terms is not to be traced to a loss of them, but to the fact that the savages have never yet risen high enough in intellect to distinguish the concrete from the abstract. A missionary once wished to translate "God is Love;" and he tried to find a Kaffir word for love by asking what the natives liked best, proposing to use their expression for "liking" as a synonym for the word he wished to translate. He obtained the word, and used it; but what did it mean? To eat meat in an advanced state of decomposition! Compare such languages with Greek, and you will see how speech follows in the wake of mental endowment and progress. A lexicon which gives the history of words shows the growth of thought, in the developing use of its signs. Adjectives are first used to point out qualities inherent in concrete objects; and it is not till after the lapse of time that their neuters become used as marks to designate such qualities, no longer as attached to material things, but as entities by themselves. In the case of the expression, τὸ Θεῖον, *to theion*, as a synonym for the Deity, it seems not to have been used until the fifth, or middle, period of Greek literature, the time of Herodotus, between 470 and 431 B. C.*

A controversy has long existed between logicians, on the question whether language precedes thought, or thought, language, and whether thought can be conducted without language. The controversy is not unimportant; for, on it depend very largely our views of the province of logic; and by the decision we give on its merits, our very terminology will be affected. One writer speaks of Concepts and Judgments; another, of Terms and Propositions. One says, with Esser: "To think, is to designate an object through a mark or attribute." Another, with Sir William Hamilton, says: "Thought is the comprehension of a thing under a general notion." Bowen, while granting that language is the expression of thought only, still refuses to designate anything as a word except a common name. He considers thought as an act,

* Herodotus. I. 32.

exclusive of perception, and the mere reference of single objects or intuitions to classes, and so makes language follow the exercise of the powers of abstraction. McCosh makes thought an act, both intuitive and discursive, and holds a theory which may be well expressed in the couplet :

"Thought leapt out to wed with Thought,
Ere Thought could wed itself to Speech."

It is, to a great degree, a controversy about words. In the ambiguities of Precept, Concept, Language, Words, Thought, we become lost. The term "Thought" is not, with any good reason, confined to the results of the thinking process, but is properly applied to that process itself ; and McCosh is, doubtless, correct in calling every exercise of the intelligence, Thought, and in discriminating Intuitive from Discursive Thought. On that ground, all can agree with Hamilton in saying : " presentations and representations of given individual objects might have taken place, although there were no signs with which they were mentally connected." A species of thought is possible without language ; and language follows nature's demand for the expression of thought and feeling.

II. A second law is that language follows the conditions of the vocal organism. The sounds which any sentient being can utter, depend upon the physical structure of the vocal organs, and upon the habits of life by which they are affected. Whatever tends to lessen or increase the elasticity of the vocal chords, to lessen or increase the distensive or contractive power of the pharynx, to open or close the nasal passages, or to modify the form of the cavity of the mouth, must modify the sounds emitted, and must ultimately affect the spelling of words written to denote these sounds. These modifications of spelling perpetuate the original changes of pronunciation, and produce new changes. Any one, by making alterations in the relative positions of the organs of speech, can produce, after a little practice, any required sound. This fact has been confirmed and explained by scientific observation ; and on it have been based practical methods of acquiring the pronunciation of the most difficult sounds, and of teaching the dumb to speak. Helmholtz had perceived that each note has

three aspects,—elevation, or place in the scale of sounds, which arises from the number of vibrations originating it,—power, or intensity, arising from the amplitude of the vibrations,—and quality, by which we mean that peculiar difference given to each note by the different instruments that produce it. He put leaden soldiers on the notes, or keys, of a piano. When any note was struck, other notes, harmonic to the first note, were so affected that the leaden figures on them fell. He next found that the harmonics so affected, varied with the form of the instrument. This explained to Helmholtz what one would think needed no explanation, that the different vowels and the peculiarities of individual voices are due to the various shapes and positions assumed by the individual organs of utterance. Professor Bell has made this the basis of his "Visible Speech," by the aid of which even an Englishman may pronounce the Gaelic word for *calf*, and dumb people may learn to utter articulate sounds; though what is called the *timbre* or individuality of tone, depending on individuality of structure, is not, as a general thing, under the control of the will.

An important result of the experiments of Helmholtz remains to be noticed. As the vowels emitted depend upon physical conformation and attitude, and as changes in the physical conformation are produced gradually, so, when history records two entirely different pronunciations, by the same nation, of the same vowel or consonant sound, at different periods of its history, we may naturally expect to find an intermediate period when an intermediate sound prevailed. Thus, before the sound of *o*, as in *encore*, could pass into that of the German *umlaut ü*, it must have passed through the intermediate stage of *eu* as in *fleur*. This may be tested by gradually projecting the lips more and more while sounding *o*. The actual facts confirm the correctness of this. Before the Latin *morum* became the modern French *mûre*, it passed through the old French form *meure*; and *motum* became *meu* before it settled into *mû*.

Of the fact that the conditions of the physical organism affect the form of language, we have a proof when we suffer from

a cold. To illustrate this, Papillon, in his Manual of Comparative Philology, gives the following stanza from "The Lay of the Influenzed" :

" Dever bore bedearth the bood
Shall byrtle boughs edtwide ;
Dever bore thy bellow voice
Bake belody with bide."

The last instance I shall notice, is that of the changes in what are called "spirants." Every scholar knows that the initial *s* of Sanskrit words often answer to the *spiritus asper* and to the digamma (F) of Greek, although he may not be able to trace their relationship ; and every teacher of Greek has found it impossible to explain to inquiring students the formation of the Attic perfect ἀκήκοα, ἀκῆκοα, apart from the relation of the F to *v*. But the law of physical form explains the connection of all these letters. Let him who pronounces the Latin *sedes* project and contract his lips, and *sedes* will become marvellously like the Greek ἔδος *hedos*. Then let him, while trying to pronounce this latter word, contract his lips still more, and draw the lower one slightly back, and ἔδος, *hedos* becomes precisely the βῆδος, *bhedos* of the old Doric and Æolic, the β being sounded like *bh*, nearly like the modern Greek β, or the ancient F. The linguistic changes between the Sanscrit, the Greek and the Latin, then, were due to certain changes, often very slight, in the relative positions of the organs of speech.

III. A third law is that language follows nature's tendency to the least necessary exertion. The law of parsimony is universal in nature, which is sparing both of time and effort ; and human nature is not excepted from the general tendency. In reasoning, it is an acknowledged principle that *entia non sunt multiplicanda prae ter necessitatem*. In action, too, the same principle prevails. The oldest MSS. of the New Testament are uncials, whose large and disconnected characters must have given the writers much labor. The newer MSS. are cursives, whose abbreviations are numerous and puzzling. To cursive writing, has succeeded phonography ; and phonography itself develops its reporting style out of its more laborious corresponding style. That which

takes place in written speech happens, also, in spoken. We are prodigal neither of time nor effort. This tendency to economy is called the law of ease, and seems to be the most potent influence at work in the modification of languages. It manifests itself chiefly by abbreviations, transmutations, transpositions and by imitation. Our own language furnishes many instances of this tendency to abbreviate, transmute and transpose. Port Ryerse, on Lake Erie, near the old homestead of the Ryerson family, shows, in its name, the effect of indistinct enunciation on terminations. The Gooderham family are not seldom spoken of as "Goodrum." Of this tendency, Britain furnishes abundant examples in the names Alnwick, Deptford, Haverford-west, Greenwich, Keswick, Launceston, Leicester, Gloucester, Kircudbright, Cholmondeley, Beauchamp, &c.

In Canada, what multitudes complain of "rheumatiz" and "neuralagi." Old Scotch folk never consult a dictionary, but always "the dictionar." Caughnawaga becomes Caughnawag.

Dr. Frechette has deserved well of his countrymen for having preserved in his dramas, for the philologist, many interesting examples of the same law, operating amongst the French-Canadians. From one scene I adduce the following: "*Canayen*;" "*épi tué son beau-frère en duel, comme y disent*;" "*Et pis, y a la bande de voleurs du Carouge*."*

The same tendency to abbreviate is heard when, in the Channel Islands, the peasant mother rocks her babe to sleep to the chorus of her song:

*"Dors, dors m'n éfant,
Il en est temps."*

In fact, no language better exhibits the effects of this law than the French. *Compte*, e.g., comes from *computum*, through the abbreviation *comptum*, the atonic vowel of the penultimate having been dropped in the rapid pronunciation of common life.

In Italian, the letter *l* becomes *i*, as in *plus*, which has become *piu*, while *plenus* has become *pieno*, *plumbum*, *piombo*, and *pluere*, *piovvere*, *clavis chiave*, *clamare chiamare* *flamma fiamma*, *glans ghian-da*, and *flos fiore*.

* *Le Retour de l'Exilé*, Act I, Scene ii.

Latin tells the same tale, whether we consult Plautus or the *Graffiti* of Pompeii,—those scribblings by idle Romans “of the baser sort,” on post and wall. *Tabula* becomes *tabla*, *positus* becomes *postus*, &c.

Few instances of the loss of vowel sounds occur in Greek; yet, from the stem *πετ*, *pēt*, we have *πίπτω*, *píp'tō*; from *γεν*, *gēn*, we have *γίγνομαι*, *gig'nōmai*; and from *μεν*, *mēn*, we get *μῖμνω*, *mim'nō*, to say nothing of *πατρός*, *pat'rōs*, and *μητρός*, *māt'ros*.

Nor does the law affect vowels alone, as has been seen in the Italian *i* from *l*. After the time of Constantine the Great, the City of Boulogne was called Bononia, and after the Carlovingians, Bolonia, whence came the modern name. *Credentia* must have dropped the *d*, and become *Creentia*, before it became in French, *créance*; and *ligare* must first have become *liare*, before settling into *lier*. One of the advantages of the French language in Philology is that in the historical documents of France, these transitional forms are actually found.

The effects of rapid utterance find interesting examples in modern Greek, also. *τὴν Αἰγυπτὸν*, (pronounced *Teen Eg-eepton*) becomes *τὴν Αἰγυπτο*, (*pr. teen Eg-eepto*), *τὴν Σάμον*, (*pr. teen Samon*) becomes *τὴ Σάμο*, (*pr. tee Sam-o*) and *τὴν πόλιν* is pronounced *teem bōlin*. From the same cause, the dative case has disappeared from the vernacular of Greece. *Τῷ εἶπε*, is now pronounced *τοῦ εἶπε* (*too eepe*) and *μοὶ εἶπε*, has become *μοῦ εἶπε*, (*moo eepe*) the genitive form having supplanted the dative, purely through changes in pronunciation.

Apparent exceptions only serve, when examined, to confirm the rule. Generally, difficult sounds do not arise from easier ones; hence we should not expect to find middle mutes developing into hard or tenues. Yet *λέγω*, *lego*, gives *λεκτός*, *lektos*, and not *λεγτός*, *legtos*. But this arises from the fact that it is easier to pronounce together mutes of similar strength than those of dissimilar. It would seem, too, that the decay of old forms could never be manifested by the addition of new sounds; yet such is the fact. In the transition from Latin to French, *humilis*, after becom-

ing *humilis*, must have inserted a b sound, in order to become the basis of *humble*. So of *cumulus* into *comble*, *numerus* into *nombre*, *ponere* into *pondre* and *gener* into *gendre*. In Greek, too, *μολεῖν*, *molein*, must have given *μεμόλωκα*, *mēmōlōka*, and then *μεμλωκα*, *mēmłōka*, before it gave the perfect *μέμβλωκα*, *mēmblōka*. But even this insertion of the β, *b*, arose from the same law of ease, since the concurrence of the two liquids would have rendered the pronunciation more difficult and unpleasant than the combination of a liquid and a mute.

The same law of ease acts by imitation. It is generally most comfortable to follow custom and float with the stream; hence there is a tendency to uniformity in language as in other things, and imitation of others leads to new customs and new forms which change grammatical structure, and so produce new languages out of the ruins of the old. There arises a disposition to avoid irregularities; and if the time comes when old inflections seem to be irregularities, their office is supplied by prepositions; for Nature seldom leaves destruction without the power of regeneration, and where a want is felt, new means of supplying it will be found if the old either are or seem incompetent. In the "Nonne Prestes Tale" of Chaucer, we read of the Chauntecleer, that

"The sonne," he sayde, "is clomben up on hevene
Fourty degrees and oon, and more i-wis;"

but the tendency to avoid irregularities has driven *clomb* and *clomben* out of use, and has supplied their place with *climbed*. So, also, *holpen* has made way for *helped*.

In the same way, too, when the Saxon came forth from his hiding places in the woods and marshes and islands, to his old fields once over-run by the Norman, the apparent superfluity of his Anglo-Saxon terminations gradually led to their abandonment. By this same tendency has arisen the reduction, in modern Greek, of many words originally of various declensions to one. But, perhaps, one of the most interesting instances of this tendency to imitate the past and the established, and never to abandon it unless under the pressure of some necessity, is seen in the case of French accentuation. Accent, in French, has four meanings.

There is the tonic accent, or syllabic emphasis ; provincial accent, or the intonation peculiar to some province ; oratorical accent, or the modulation which emotion gives to words ; and grammatical accent, or the signs used in writing words, and serving various purposes in orthography. It is in reference to provincial accent only that the adage is true : " He who speaks French well has no accent." Littré and Brachet are very emphatic in their assertions that French has an accent, and both give the rule for placing it ; but this is the tonic accent. The rule is that every masculine termination is accented, and every feminine termination puts the accent on the penultimate. The same rule is given by Brachet in his Etymological Dictionary. That this rule is correct may be learned by carefully observing the accent of any one who speaks French, or it may be noticed in reading French prose. It is the basis of that rhythmic harmony which gives so much pleasure to the hearers of finished oratory. Even now, let any one read the impassioned perorations of Massillon, say that of his 12th Synodal Discourse, on the necessity of prayer, and it will be seen at once that much of its power lay in the preservation and arrangement of this tonic accent. But when you read French Poetry, you become conscious that the rule is no longer observed. I shall quote a stanza from the "*Prière du Matin*," of Benjamin Sulte, found on page 102 of "*Les Laurentiennes*."

" Sonnez, chantez, gais carillons,
La voix des cloches m'est si chère !
C'est Dimanche, et, tous, nous allons
Dire avec vous notre prière."

It will be noticed that the rule referred to would put the tonic accent on the second syllable of *Dimanche*, while our Canadian poet has put it on the first :

C'est Dimanche, et, tous, nous allons.

Likewise, in the fourth line, the accent is made to fall on the first syllable of *avec* instead of the second, as the rule demands :

Dire avec vous notre prière.

To show how a prose writer would accent that word, I quote from the "*Philosophe sous les Toits*" of Emile Souvestre, a passage found on page 142 : *Je n'ai pas besoin de te dire de ménager ta vie, parce que*

tu sais que la mienne est avec." I will not pause to call attention to the French-Canadian Idiom, found in the Parisian garret, *avec* without a following regimen, but will simply note that when the final word *avec* is read in prose, the accent falls naturally on the last syllable, and not on the first, as in the verse of poetry just examined. Perhaps the same apparent inconsistency may be better seen in a couple of quotations from the poems entitled *Chanson* and *Consolons-nous*, on pages 85 and 164 of *Les Laurentiennes*. The scansion will reveal a double accent on the same word. The first line of the *Chanson* reads :

"Ami, tû veûx, poûr mē distraire,"

which when scanned, as may be seen by the marks I have used to point out the light and the heavy syllables, puts the ictus on the second syllable of *ami*.

In the second stanza of *Consolons-nous* we have :

*"Lê malheur est ün ami tēdrê
Qu'ôn petit bēnir ;"*

and the scansion shows the ictus on the first syllable of *ami*, instead of the second.

The same contrast between the accent in poetry and in prose exists from the time of Thiabeault, in the 13th century, through Charles D'Orléans in the 14th, to Corneille in the 16th, and to Victor Hugo in our own days. Whence arose this diversity? Ancient poetry, in the nation from whose speech the Romance languages sprang, was largely based upon prosodial quantity, not on tonic accent. But the tonic accent was that which was most heard amongst the people ; and, between it and the distinction of syllables into long and short, there arose a struggle, the result of which could not long be doubtful when men began to inquire into the utility of preserving that which was unusual and apparently unnatural. Utility and tradition clashed, and tradition had to yield. As Littré says : "*l'ancien vers à longues et à brèves se trouva sans raison d'être.*" Then came the incursions of the barbarians. Next arose new nations, speaking new tongues. When a new poetry sprang up, nothing had occurred to lessen the importance of the cæsura, and conservatism preserved it as a fundamental principle in versification. At the place of the cæsura, no syllable

ordinarily mute could bear the fundamental accent, which generally fell on the fourth, the sixth and the tenth syllables. But it was soon found that intractable matter, in the shape of words, refused so often to bear the tonic accent, and yet fit in harmoniously into the allotted spaces, that a wide poetic license was the consequence, and the tonic accent in its turn had to yield to the exigencies of versification. Hence, when the demands of the *cæsura* were met, that became true which Littré says: "the remainder of the accents are optional, and serve the poet to vary the modulation and conform it to the feeling which inspires him." It will thus be seen that French accentuation proves the law of ease by showing that men continue to imitate the past until sheer necessity drives them to a change. It may not be without interest to know that modern Greek furnishes a case exactly parallel. Geldart, in his work on that language says: "In modern Greek, quantitative verse no longer exists, and therefore the quantity of syllables has lost the chief significance which it once possessed. That quantity was ever recognized in pronunciation apart from metrical considerations, there is but small evidence to show." As an illustration of the first part of this quotation, I present a poem entitled "Bacchi Laudes," written by Athanasios Christopoulos.

This must be read with the modern Greek pronunciation, which is represented under the lines, and according to the accents.

Όταν πίνω τὸ κρασάκι
Otan peenoh toh krasaki
Ἐστο χρυσὸ μου ποτηράκι
Stoh khreesoh moo poteeraki
Καὶ ὁ νοῦς μου ζαλισθῇ.
Keh o noos moo zalisthee
Τότ' ἀρχίζω καὶ χορεύω,
Tot arkhizoh keh khorebhoh
Καὶ γελῶ καὶ χωρατεύω,
Keh yeloh keh khohratebhoh
Κὴ ζωὴ μ' εὐχαριστεῖ.
Kee zoe n' ebkhharistee
Τότε παύουν ἡ φροντίδες
Tote pah-bhoon ee phrondeethes

Τότε σβύνουν ἡ ἐλπίδες
Tote zbheenooh ee elpeethes
Τότε φεύγουν οἱ καπνοί.
Tote phebghoon ee kapnee
Κὴ καρδιά μου γαληνίζει,
Kee kardeea moo ghaleeneezee
Καὶ τὸ στήθος μου ἀρχίζει
Keh toh steethos moo arkheezee
Ν' ἀνασαίνει, ν' ἀναπνῇ.
N' anasehnee, n' anapnee
Γιὰ τὸν κόσμον δὲν μὲ μέλει,
Gheeah ton kozmon dhen me melee
Ἄς γυρίζῃ, ὅπως θέλει,
As gheereezee, opohs thelee

Τὸ κρασάκι μου νὰ ζῇ.
 Toh krasaki moo na zee
 Ἡ κανάτα νὰ μὴ σπένψῃ,
 Ec kanata na mee steepsee
 Ἀπ' τὸ πλάγι νὰ μὴ λείψῃ,
 Ap toh plaghee na mee leepsee
 Ν' ἀποθάνωμε μαζί.
 N' apothanohme mazee
 Ὅσο ἔχω τοῦτον, τοῦτον
 Osoh ekhoh tooton, tooton

Τὸν ἀκένωτόν μου πλοῦτον,
 Ton akenohtohn moo plooton
 Κῶσο πίνω καὶ ρομφῶ
 Kosoh peenoh keh roophoh
 Ὅλα σκέβαλα τὰ ἔχω,
 Ola skeebhala ta ekhoh
 Εἰς κανένα δὲν προσέχω,
 Ees kanena dhen prosekhoh
 Καὶ κανένα δὲν ψηφῶ.
 Keh kanena dhen pseephoh.*

Let any one read that drinking song, as Greek is usually read by English scholars, according to quantity, and he will see how rhyme and rhythm vanish; but the comparison of that method with the pronunciation and accents of modern Greece, will convince him that there, as in France, the easy imitation of the customary finally prevailed over what seemed artificial and unnecessary.

IV. The last law which I shall notice is this: Language is moulded by external circumstances.

(a). Education, or the want of it, plays a great part in modifying speech, and in retarding modifications. When the eye has become accustomed to the written forms of words, the permanence of a correct pronunciation is largely secured. This has fixed the High German as the language of Germany since Luther published the Bible in that form. Were the eye trained to look carefully

* Where Geldart has hesitated to give a translation, it is presumptuous to attempt to supply it; yet, for some clue to the sense of the song given above, and to its rhythm, though not its rhyme, the following may, perhaps, be allowed:

When I sip the costly vintage
 From my little golden goblet,
 And my brain reels all confused,
 Then I start at once to dancing,
 Then I laugh and sport in joking,
 And my life flies gratefully.
 Then my cares all quit existence,
 Then my hopes extinguish troubles,
 Then my mind's conceits run free,
 And my heart subsides in quiet,
 And begins my breast its heaving,
 Heaving, breathing, peacefully.

Then, for this round world what care I?
 Let it wander as it pleases,
 So that wine remains with me.
 Let the jar not cease its flowing,
 From my side, let it not leave me,
 Let us die together here.
 This, ah! this, all my possession,
 This, my one exhaustless treasure,
 Sip I, drink I, I alone—
 All the very dregs I cherish,
 Guard them not for any other,
 And all others I despise.

upon printed forms, would the expression, "I should of done it," sometimes heard and sometimes written, ever supplant the proper form, "I should have done it?" What but the want of a trained eye led English soldiers in India to call Surajah Dowlah, "Sir Roger Dowler?"

An interesting fact in this connection is the formation of the word Stamboul for Constantinople. The Greeks, when speaking of entering that city, had an expression exactly equivalent to our "going to town," the words "to town" being *εἰς τὴν Πόλιν*, pronounced *ees teen Bolee*. The Turks, judging from sound and not from sight, supposed that *εἰς* and *τὴν* were parts of the noun, and so formed the word Stambol or Stamboul.

(*b*). Climate, too, by its influence on muscular action, has affected our sounds and speech. Alex. von Humboldt, in his *Cosmos*, says: "There ever remains a trace of the impression which the natural disposition has received from climate, from the clear azure of the heavens, or from the less serene aspect of a vapour-loaded atmosphere. Such influences have their place among those thousand subtle and evanescent links in the electric chain of thought from whence, as from the perfume of a tender flower, language derives its richness and its grace." The Latin, smooth and sonorous in the south, shrank, as it developed into French, and became stiffer and less musical as it moved north and west. Burgundy, Ile de France and Normandy lie precisely in the geographical line indicated; and it is interesting to notice how the Latin *amabam* became first *amève* in Burgundy, then *amoié* (pronounced as a French-Canadian would pronounce it, *amoué*) in Ile de France, and at last *amoue* in Normandy. From this, Brachet says: "May we not conclude that words, like plants, are modified by climate, which is one of the *factors* of language, as mathematicians say?"

(*c*). Personal influence, too, moulds language. Many monuments are found in the history of literature to show that no man can arbitrarily impose laws upon the natural development of language. Ronsard's efforts to trim the French according to classic models ended in complete failure. But it has fallen to the lot of individuals so to adapt their labors to the growing tendencies of

their times that they have become leaders in the advance. Of such were Luther in Germany, Chaucer in England, and Ptochoprodromus in modern Greek.*

(d). Political changes are productive of modifications in language. Court standards of speech ever produce their effect ; for the desire to appear to the best advantage is a human instinct, and will show itself in its efforts to copy what has a reputation for refinement and elevation. When the Norman rules, "calf" and "swine" are unfashionable terms ; and "pork" and "veal" become the accredited substitutes. But woe to the language of the court itself when the *citoyen*, the *canaille*, and the *sansculottes* bear rule ! The sounds that betray aristocratic lineage must then be hushed ; for the guillotine is near. Then, the tones of Molière, still exhibited in the rhymes of his comedies, are relegated to the "*quelques arpents de neige*" called Canada ; and a new pronunciation reigns in Paris, and rules the world that follows Paris.

(e). Commerce, too, contributes its share to the modification of language. The facilities for intercourse which now exist, our railroads, steamships, telegraphs, telephones, &c., must, in time, narrow down the list of necessary languages, so that barbarous and curious old tongues must be left for the archæologist and the philologist, while a few leading languages will prove, eventually, sufficient for the intercourse of men whose powers "no pent-up Utica contracts."

Three hundred years ago, Hooker penned this sentence :— "Of Law, there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world ; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power ; both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

Beautiful words and true ! The centuries have but confirmed them ; and the voice of the hills replies to the voice of the depths that, in Law we have a revelation of Him in whose bosom it rests,

* Geldart, p.82.

and that, by the study of Laws, the jarring diversities of human thought and action are turned to harmony and peace and joy. The study of law has revealed the true method by which God has brought from things that do not appear this wonderful universe of usefulness and beauty. Law has revealed the true origin of nations, and has unfolded the universal methods of the human mind in its attainment of truth and goodness. It unfolds to us the secrets of individual and national prosperity. Every contribution, however small, to our knowledge of its universal empire removes some misconception, clears the way for a larger and truer view, and helps to remove the encumbrances of ancient fancies from the pillars of eternal truth.

Philology, the study of the Laws of Language, if it cannot lead us back to the very beginning of human speech, leaves us not without some rational account of the origin of the diversities of tongues, shows how intimately man is connected with the material world, and, by revealing some causes of his progress or degradation, suggests the means for his improvement and success. Perhaps, too, by showing the influence of man on man, the perpetuation in one age of the influence of former ages, and the existence of a plan and purpose in the rise and fall of languages, the study of Law in Language may lead to the recognition of a wise and kindly Power behind the phenomena of growing civilizations, and a reverent regard for Him who, by the moulding power of speech, trains both Aryan and Semite for the work of raising all humanity nearer and nearer to Himself.

